THE

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

Pennſylvania Society,

FOR

PROMOTING

THE

Abolition of Slavery, &c.

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OF THE

Pennſylvania Society,

FOR PROMOTING THE

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY,

AND THE RELIEF OF

FREE NEGROES,

UNLAWFULLY HELD IN

BONDAGE.

BEGUN IN THE YEAR 1774, AND ENLAGRED ON THE TWENTY-THIRD OF APRIL, 1787.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

THE ACTS OF THE General Aſſembly of Pennſylvania,

FOR THE

Gradual Abolition of Slavery.

"*All Things whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.*" Mat. vii. 12.

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ENLARGED AT PHILADELPHIA, APRIL 23d, 1787.

IT having pleaſed the Creator of the world, to make of one fleſh, all the children of men—it becomes them to conſult and promote each other's happineſs, as members of the ſame family, however diverſified they may be, by colour, ſituation, religion, or different ſtates of ſociety. It is more eſpecially the duty of thoſe perſons, who profeſs to maintain for themſelves the rights of human nature, and who acknowledge the obligations of Chriſtianity, to uſe ſuch means as are in their power, to extend the bleſſings of freedom to every part of the human race; and in a more particular manner, to ſuch of their fellow-creatures, as are entitled to freedom by the laws and conſtitutions of any of the United States, and who, notwithſtanding, are detained in bondage, by fraud or violence.—From a full conviction of the truth and obligation of theſe principles—from a deſire to diffuſe them, wherever the miſeries and vices of ſlavery exiſt, and in humble confidence of the favour and ſupport of the Father of Mankind, the ſubſcribers have aſſociated themſelves under the title of the "Pennſylvania Society for promoting the abolition of ſlavery, and the relief of free Negroes unlawfully held in bondage." Introduction.

For effecting theſe purpoſes, they have adopted the following conſtitution: I. The

The Officers of the ſociety.

I. The officers of the ſociety ſhall conſiſt of a preſident, two vice-preſidents, two ſecretaries, a treaſurer, four counſellors, an electing committee of twelve, and an acting committee of ſix members; all of whom, except the laſt named committee, ſhall be choſen annually by ballot, on the firſt SECOND-DAY called Monday, in the month called January.

Duty of the preſidents and vice-preſidents.

II. The preſident, and in his abſence one of the vice-preſidents, ſhall preſide in all the meetings, and ſubſcribe all the public acts of the ſociety. The preſident, or in his abſence, either of the vice-preſidents, ſhall moreover have the power of calling a ſpecial meeting of the ſociety whenever he ſhall judge proper. A ſpecial meeting ſhall likewiſe be called at any time, when ſix members of the ſociety ſhall concur in requeſting it.

Of the ſecretaries.

III. The ſecretaries ſhall keep fair records of the proceedings of the ſociety, and ſhall correſpond with ſuch perſons and ſocieties, as may be judged neceſſary to promote the views and objects of the inſtitution.

Of the treaſurer.

IV. The treaſurer ſhall keep all the monies and ſecurities belonging to the ſociety, and ſhall pay all orders ſigned by the preſident or one of the vice-preſidents—which orders ſhall be his vouchers for his expenditures. He ſhall, before he enters upon his office, give a bond of not leſs than two hundred pounds, for the faithful diſcharge of the duties of it.

Of the counſellors.

V. The buſineſs of the counſellors ſhall be to explain the laws aud conſtitutions of the ſtates, which relate to the emancipation of ſlaves, and to urge their claims to freedom, when legal, before ſuch perſons or courts as are authorized to decide upon them.

Of the electing committee.

VI. The electing committee ſhall have the ſole power of admitting new members. Two-thirds of them ſhall be a quorum for this purpoſe—and the concurrence of a majority of them by ballot, when met, ſhall be neceſſary for the admiſſion of a member. No member ſhall be admitted, who has not been propoſed at a general meeting of the ſociety, nor ſhall an election for a member take place in leſs than one month after the time of his being propoſed. Foreigners or perſons who do not reſide in this ſtate, may be elected correſponding members of the ſociety, without being ſubject to any annual payment, and ſhall be admitted to the meetings of the ſociety during their reſidence in the ſtate.

VII. The acting committee shall transact such business as shall occur in the recess of the society, and report the same at each quarterly meeting.——They shall have a right, with the concurrence of the president or one of the vice-presidents, to draw upon the treasurer for such sums of money as shall be necessary to carry on the business of their appointment. Four of them shall be a quorum. After their first election, two of their number shall be relieved from duty at each quarterly meeting, and two members shall be appointd to succeed them. Duty of the acting committee.

VIII. Every member upon his admission, shall subscribe the constitution of the society, and contribute ten shillings annually in quarterly payments, towards defraying its contingent expences. If he neglects to pay the same for more than two years, he shall, upon due notice being given him of his delinquency, cease to be a member. Sum to be paid annually.

IX. The society shall meet on the first SECOND-DAY called Monday, in the months called January, April, July and October, at such place as shall be agreed to by a majority of the society. Days of meeting.

X. No person holding a slave shall be admitted a member of this society. No slave-holder to be a member.

XI. No law or regulation shall contradict any part of the constitution of the society, nor shall any law or alteration in the constitution be made, without being proposed at a previous meeting. All questions shall be decided, where there is a division, by a majority of votes. In those cases where the society is equally divided, the presiding officer shall have a casting vote. Manner of altering the constitution, and making laws, and of deciding questions.

OFFICERS

The Present Officers of the Society.

PRESIDENT:
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

VICE-PRESIDENTS:
JAMES PEMBERTON,
JONATHAN PENROSE.

SECRETARIES:
BENJAMIN RUSH,
TENCH COXE.

TREASURER:
JAMES STARR.

COUNSELLORS:
WILLIAM LEWIS,
JOHN D. COXE,
MIERS FISHER,
WILLIAM RAWLE.

ELECTING COMMITTEE:

THOMAS HARRISON,
NATHAN BOYS,
JAMES WHITEALL,
JAMES READ,
JOHN TODD,
THOMAS ARMATT,
NORRIS JONES,
SAMUEL RICHARDS,
FRANCIS BAILEY,
ANDREW CARSON,
JOHN WARNER,
JACOB SHOEMAKER, jun.

ACTING COMMITTEE:

THOMAS SHIELDS,
THOMAS PARKER,
JOHN OLDDEN,
WILLIAM ZANE,
JOHN WARNER,
WILLIAM M'ELHENNEY.

An

An ACT *for the gradual Abolition of Slavery.*

Section I. WHEN we contemplate our abhorrence of that condition, to which the arms and tyranny of Great Britain were exerted to reduce us—when we look back on the variety of dangers to which we have been expoſed, and how miraculouſly our wants in many inſtances have been ſupplied, and our deliverances wrought, when even hope and human fortitude have become unequal to the conflict—we are unavoidably led to a ſerious and grateful ſenſe of the manifold bleſſings which we have undeſervedly received from the hand of that Being, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh. Impreſſed with theſe ideas, we conceive that it is our duty, and we rejoice that it is in our power, to extend a portion of that freedom to others, which hath been extended to us; and a releaſe from that ſtate of thraldom, to which we ourſelves were tyrannically doomed, and from which we have now every proſpect of being delivered. It is not for us to enquire why, in the creation of mankind, the inhabitants of the ſeveral parts of the earth were diſtinguiſhed by a difference in feature or complexion. It is ſufficient to know that all are the work of an Almighty Hand. We find in the diſtribution of the human ſpecies, that the moſt fertile as well as the moſt barren parts of the earth are inhabited by men of complexions different from ours, and from each other; from whence we may reaſonably, as well as religiouſly, infer, that he who placed them in their various ſituations, hath extended equally his care and protection to all, and that it becometh not us to counteract his mercies. We eſteem it a peculiar bleſſing granted to us, that we are enabled this day to add one more ſtep to univerſal civilization, by removing, as much as poſſible, the ſorrows of thoſe who have lived in undeſerved bondage, and from which, by the aſſumed authority of the kings of Great Britain, no effectual, legal, relief could be obtained. Weaned by a long courſe of experience from thoſe narrow prejudices and partialities we had imbibed, we find our hearts enlarged with kindneſs and benevolence towards men of all conditions and nations; and we conceive ourſelves at this particular period extraordinarily called upon, by the bleſſings which we have received, to manifeſt the ſincerity of our profeſſion, and to give a ſubſtantial proof of our gratitude. Preamble.

Section II. AND WHEREAS the condition of thoſe perſons who have heretofore been denominated Negro and Mulatto ſlaves, has been attended with circumſtances which not only deprived them of the common bleſſings that they were by nature entitled to, but has caſt them into the deepeſt afflictions by an unnatural ſeparation and ſale of huſband and wife from each other and from their children—an injury, the greatneſs of which can only be conceived by ſuppoſing that we were in the ſame unhappy caſe. In juſtice, therefore, to perſons ſo unhappily circumſtanced, and who, having no proſpect before them whereon they may reſt their ſorrows and their hopes, have no reaſonable inducement to render their ſervice to ſociety, which otherwiſe they might; and alſo in grateful commemoration of our own happy deliverance from that ſtate of unconditional ſubmiſſion to which we were doomed by the tyranny of Britain.

No child born hereafter to be a ſlave.

Section III. Be it enacted, and it is hereby enacted, by the repreſentatives of the freemen of the commonwealth of Pennſylvania, in general aſſembly met, and by the authority of the ſame, That all perſons, as well Negroes and Mulattoes and others, who ſhall be born within this ſtate from and after the paſſing of this act, ſhall not be deemed and conſidered as ſervants for life, or ſlaves; and that all ſervitude for life, or ſlavery of children, in conſequence of the ſlavery of their mothers, in the caſe of all children born within this ſtate, from and after the paſſing of this act as aforeſaid, ſhall be, and hereby is utterly taken away, extinguiſhed and forever aboliſhed.

Negro and Mulatto children to be ſervants till 28 years of age.

Section IV. Provided always, and be it further enacted, by the authority aforeſaid, That every Negro and Mulatto child born within this ſtate after the paſſing of this act as aforeſaid (who would in caſe this act had not been made, have been born a ſervant for years, or life, or a ſlave) ſhall be deemed to be, and ſhall be, by virtue of this act, the ſervant of ſuch perſon or his or her aſſigns, who would, in ſuch caſe, have been entitled to the ſervice of ſuch child, until ſuch child ſhall attain unto the age of twenty-eight years, in the manner and on the conditions whereon ſervants bound by indenture for four years are or may be retained and holden; and ſhall be liable to like correction and puniſhment, and entitled to like relief in caſe he or ſhe be evilly treated by his or her maſter or miſtreſs, and to like freedom dues and other privileges as ſervants bound by indenture for four years are or may be entitled, unleſs the perſon to whom the ſervice of any ſuch child ſhall belong ſhall abandon his or her claim to the ſame; in which caſe the overſeers of the poor of the city, townſhip or diſtrict reſpectively, where

where such child shall be so abandoned, shall by indenture bind out every child, so abandoned, as an apprentice for a time not exceeding the age herein before limited for the service of such children.

Section V. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That every person, who is or shall be the owner of any Negro or Mulatto slave or servant for life, or till the age of thirty-one years, now within this state, or his lawful attorney, shall on or before the said first day of November next, deliver or cause to be delivered in writing to the clerk of the peace of the county, or to the clerk of the court of record of the city of Philadelphia, in which he or she shall respectively inhabit, the name, and surname, and occupation or profession of such owner, and the name of the county and township, district or ward wherein he or she resideth; and also the name and names of any such slave and slaves, and servant and servants for life or till the age of thirty-one years, together with their ages and sexes severally and respectively set forth and annexed, by such person owned or statedly employed and their being within this state, in order to ascertain and distinguish the slaves and servants for life and till the age of thirty-one years, within this state, who shall be such, on the said first day of November next, from all other persons; which particulars shall by said clerk of the sessions and clerk of the said court be entered in books to be provided for that purpose by the said clerks; and that no Negro or Mulatto, now within this state, shall from and after the said first day of November, be deemed a slave or servant for life, or till the age of thirty-one years, unless his or her name shall be entered as aforesaid on such record, except such Negro and Mulatto slaves and servants as are herein after excepted; the same clerk to be entitled to a fee of two dollars for each slave or servant so entered as aforesaid from the treasurer of the county, to be allowed to him in his accounts.

All slaves to be registered before the 1st of November next.

Section VI. Provided always, That any person in whom the ownership or right to the service of any Negro or Mulatto shall be vested at the passing of this act, other than such as are herein before excepted, his or her heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, and all and every of them severally shall be liable to the overseers of the poor of the city, township or district to which any such Negro or Mulatto shall become chargeable, for such necessary expence, with costs of suit thereon, as such overseers may be put to, through the neglect of the owner, master or mistress of such Negro or Mulatto; notwithstanding the name and other descriptions of such Negro or Mulatto shall not be

Owners of slaves, though not registered, to be liable for their support, unless, &c.

be entered and recorded as aforesaid; unless his or her master or owner shall before such slave or servant attain his or her twenty-eighth year, execute and record in the proper county, a deed or instrument, securing to such slave or servant, his or her freedom.

Negroes, &c. to be tried like other inhabitants.

Section VII. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the offences and crimes of Negroes and Mulattoes, as well slaves and servants as freemen, shall be enquired of, adjudged, corrected and punished in like manner as the offences and crimes of the other inhabitants of this state are and shall be enquired of, adjudged, corrected and punished, and not otherwise; except that a slave shall not be admitted to bear witness against a freeman.

Jury to value in case of sentence of death.

Section VIII. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That in all cases, wherein sentence of death shall be pronounced against a slave, the jury before whom he or she shall be tried, shall appraise and declare the value of such slave; and in case such sentence be executed, the court shall make an order on the state treasurer, payable to the owner for the same and for the costs of prosecution; but in case of remission or mitigation, for the costs only.

Reward for taking up runaways, same as for white servants.

Section IX. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the reward for taking up runaway and absconding Negro and Mulatto slaves and servants, and the penalties for enticing away, dealing with, or harbouring, concealing or employing Negro and Mulatto slaves and servants, shall be the same, and shall be recovered in like manner as in case of servants bound for four years.

None to be deemed slaves, but those registered.

Section X. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That no man or woman of any nation or colour, except the Negroes or Mulattoes who shall be registered as aforesaid, shall at any time hereafter be deemed, adjudged or holden within the territories of this commonwealth as slaves or servants for life, but as free-men and free-women; except the domestic slaves attending upon delegates in congress from the other American states, foreign ministers and consuls, and persons passing through or sojourning in this state and not becoming resident therein, and seamen employed in ships not belonging to any inhabitant of this state, nor employed in any ship owned by any such inhabitant. Provided such domestic slaves be not aliened or sold to any inhabitant, nor (except in the case of members of congress, foreign ministers and consuls) retained in this state longer than six months.

Section

Section XI. Provided always, and be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That this act or any thing in it contained, shall not give any relief or shelter to any absconding or run-away Negro or Mulatto slave or servant, who has absented himself, or shall absent himself from his or her owner, master or mistress residing in any other state or country, but such owner, master or mistress shall have like right and aid to demand, claim and take away his slave or servant, as he might have had in case this act had not been made: And that all Negro and Mulatto slaves now owned and heretofore resident in this state, who have absented themselves, or been clandestinely carried away, or who may be employed abroad as seamen and have not returned or been brought back to their owners, masters or mistresses, before the passing of this act, may within five years be registered as effectually as is ordered by this act concerning those who are now within the state, on producing such slave before any two justices of the peace, and satisfying the said justices by due proof of the former residence, absconding, taking away, or absence of such slaves as aforesaid; who thereupon shall direct and order the said slave to be entered on the record as aforesaid.

Except runaways from other states.

Slaves carried away, &c. from this state, may be brought back and registered.

Section XII. AND WHEREAS attempts may be made to evade this act, by introducing into this state Negroes and Mulattoes bound by covenant, to serve for long and unreasonable terms of years, if the same be not prevented:

Preamble.

Section XIII. Be it therefore enacted by the authority aforesaid, That no covenant of personal servitude or apprenticeship whatsoever, shall be valid or binding on a Negro or Mulatto, for a longer time than seven years, unless such servant or apprentice were, at the commencement of such servitude or apprenticeship, under the age of twenty-one years; in which case such Negro or Mulatto may be holden as a servant or apprentice respectively, according to the covenant, as the case shall be, until he or she shall attain the age of twenty-eight years, but no longer.

No Negroes or Mulattoes, other than infants, to be bound for longer than seven years.

Section XIV. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That an act of assembly of the province of Pennsylvania, passed in the year one thousand seven hundred and five, entitled, "An act for the trial of Negroes;" and another act of assembly of the said province, passed in the year one thousand seven hundred and twenty-five, entitled, "An act for the better regulating of Negroes in this province;" and another act of assembly of the said province, passed in the year one thousand seven hundred and sixty-one, entitled, "An act for laying

Repeal of former acts.

ing

ing a duty on Negro and Mulatto ſlaves imported into this province;" and alſo another act of aſſembly of the ſaid province, paſſed in the year one thouſand ſeven hundred and ſeventy-three, entitled, "An act for making perpetual an act for laying a duty on Negro and Mulatto ſlaves imported into this province; and for laying an additional duty on ſaid ſlaves," ſhall be, and are hereby repealed, annulled and made void.

JOHN BAYARD, *Speaker.*

Enacted into a Law at Philadelphia, on Wedneſday, the firſt Day of March, Anno Domini, 1780.

THOMAS PAINE,

Clerk of the General Aſſembly.

An ACT *to give Relief to certain Perſons taking Refuge in this State, with Reſpect to their Slaves.*

Preamble.

Section I. WHEREAS many virtuous citizens of America, and inhabitants of ſtates that have been invaded, are obliged by the power of the enemy, to take refuge in this ſtate. AND WHEREAS it is juſt and neceſſary that the property of ſuch perſons ſhould be protected.

Perſons taking refuge, may retain their ſlaves, &c.

Section II. Be it therefore enacted, and it is hereby enacted, by the repreſentatives of the freemen of the commonwealth of Pennſylvania, in general aſſembly met, and by the authority of the ſame, That all and every perſon and perſons, under the above deſcription, now reſiding in this ſtate, or who hereafter may be in like circumſtances, ſhall retain, poſſeſs, and hold their ſlaves; any thing in the "Act for the gradual abolition of ſlavery," paſſed the firſt day of March, one thouſand ſeven hundred and eighty, to the contrary notwithſtanding.

Provided they are regiſtered within ſix months.

Section III. Provided always, That the owner or owners of ſuch ſlaves, his or their lawful attorney, ſhall, in ſix months from the paſſing of this act, or in ſix months after their arrival in this ſtate, as the caſe may be, regiſter ſaid ſlaves in manner

and

and form directed in the fifth section of the act above mentioned, for the gradual abolition of slavery. And be it further provided, That such slaves shall not be aliened or sold to any inhabitant, nor retained in this state as slaves longer than six months after the conclusion of the present war with Great Britain.

And not sold or retained in the state longer than six months after the war.

Section IV. And be it also provided and declared, That nothing herein contained, shall be deemed, construed, or taken to enslave any person or persons, who have been emancipated or freed under or by virtue of the act aforesaid.

Proviso.

Signed by order of the House,

FREDERICK A. MUHLENBERG, *Speaker.*

Enacted into a Law at Philadelphia, on Monday, the first Day of October, Anno Domini, 1781.

SAMUEL STERRETT,

Clerk of the General Assembly.